

PSALMS

Chapter 148

Praise the Name of the LORD

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights! 2 Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts! 3 Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! 4 Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! 5 Let them praise the name of the LORD! For he commanded and they were created. 6 And he established them forever and ever; he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away. 7 Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all deeps, 8 fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy wind fulfilling his word! 9 Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars! 10 Beasts and all livestock, creeping things and flying birds! 11 Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! 12 Young men and maidens together, old men and children! 13 Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven. 14 He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his saints, for the people of Israel who are near to him. Praise the LORD!

Ps 148 A call to all things in all creation to praise the Lord. Whatever its original liturgical purpose, its placement here serves to complete the scope of the calls to praise with which the Psalter concludes. Two balanced stanzas of six verses each are followed by a two-verse conclusion. In the first stanza (vv. 1–6) the call goes to all creatures in the heavens, in the second (vv. 7–12) to all beneath the heavens (see 103:20–22). The conclusion (vv. 13–14) focuses on motivation for praise. See introduction to Ps 146. (CSB)

Third of five hallelujah psalms (see Ps 146 intro). LXX notations associate this psalm with the postexilic prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Moving from the heavens to the earth, it catalogs the whole range of the created order, from angels to children, from stars to snowflakes. The praise of creation culminates with praise for God’s own redeemed people.

Format: Vv 1–2, angelic praise; vv 3–4, heavenly praise; vv 5–6, God’s creative power; vv 7–8, God created the sea and sky; vv 9–10, He created earth and life; vv 11–12, kings and commoners praise Him; vv 13–14, Israel belongs to Him. (TLSB)

The 148th psalm is a psalm of thanks that excites and exhorts all creatures in heaven and earth to praise God – especially his saints, the children of Israel, who worship him, that is, have his Word and worship. And note that this psalm confirms all the stations of life – kings, judges, old, young. All are created by God and are good and honorable. For if the office of king or of judge were evil and not God given, one could not in such an office praise God. but where there are kings and judges, there will also be subjects, servants, hangmen, soldiers, laborers, farmers, townspeople; where there are young and old, there will be married people, children and household servants. All are honorable and good and show that their Creator is good. Rightfully, all of creation should be nothing but a tongue, always praising this great goodness of God. If you want to know good a thing is, then take whatever you will and say: “If there were no fire...” or “If there were no hangman...”; “If there were no woman...”; and so on. Then you will see why one should thank God. (Reading the Psalms with Luther)

The psalm is arranged chiastically, moving from the rational to the inanimate creatures in the heavens and then in reverse order from the inanimate to the rational on earth. (PBC)

148:1–6 Let all creatures in the heavens praise the Lord. (CSB)

The angels and the heavenly bodies are often placed side by side in the Scriptures, especially in poetic parallelism. The term “heavenly hosts” may refer to either of them. The heathen often worshiped spirits and the heavenly bodies. Though they are the more majestic and awesome of God’s creatures they are nevertheless creations whom the psalmist summons to praise their creator. (PBC)

148:1 *heights!* Heights of heaven. Lit, “the heaven of heavens.” (TLSB)

148:2 *hosts!* Lit, “army.” (TLSB)

148:3–4 Asking inanimate objects to “praise” God, even though they have no voice or consciousness, uses the poetic device of apostrophe, or addressing a personified object rhetorically. And yet, the created order does testify to God’s glory (cf Rm 8:21). (TLSB)

148:3 *sun and moon ... shining stars* – In the exuberant language of the psalmists, all creation—even its inanimate elements—joins the human chorus to celebrate the goodness of God in creation, blessing and redemption. (CSB)

148:4 *highest of heavens* – In our modern knowledge of space, we cannot even imagine the extent of the highest heavens in God’s creation, There should be no limit to the extent of praise. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

waters above the heavens. The “deep” above (see Ge 1:7; cf. “ocean depths” in v. 7 – Often taken to be an allusion to the cascading waters of the upper Jordan as they rush down from Mount Hermon. It is more likely, however, that this is a literary allusion to the “waterfalls” by which the waters from God’s storehouse of water above—the “deep” above—pour down into the streams and rivers that empty into the seas—the “deep” below. It pictures the great distress the author suffers, and the imagery is continued in the following reference to God’s “waves and breakers” sweeping over him. God’s hand is involved in the psalmist’s suffering, at least to the extent that he has allowed this catastrophe. He seems to the psalmist to have “forgotten”—to have “rejected” —him. But he makes no link between this and any sin in his life). (CSB)

Celestial waters beyond the sky. (TLSB)

148:5 *He commanded and they were created.* God created the universe by means of His Word. Chemnitz: “The matter or material from which creation took place did not exist from eternity, but all things were created out of nothing, that is, since there was nothing which was in existence, when God spoke, then things began to exist” (*LTh* 1:157). (TLSB)

name of the LORD. They are to praise the Lord because he has created them and made their existence secure. (CSB)

148:6 God establishes each entity as it is. Laws of nature are set by God’s Word, and His creatures cannot change them. (TLSB)

148:7–12 Let all creatures of earth praise the Lord. (“Heaven and earth” are the sum of all creation; see v. 13; see also 89:11; 113:6; 136:5–6; Ge 2:1, 4.) (CSB)

148:7 *sea creatures and all deeps*. Likely with Ge 1 in mind (see Ge 1:7, 10, 21), the call begins with these and moves toward the human components. This and the pairs that follow employ a figure of speech (merism) that refers to all reality pertaining to the sphere to which they belong—here, all creatures great and small that belong to the realm of lakes and seas. (CSB)

Whales, giant squid, and other huge denizens of the ocean. (TLSB)

148:8 *fulfilling his word*. Lit. “his word.”

Chemnitz: “Such things as snow, hail, and tempests ... fulfill His Word” (*LTh* 1:186). (TLSB)

148:13–14 Conclusion, with focus on motivation for praise. (CSB)

These verses are a transition to Psalm 149, which emphasizes the praise of God’s people. (PBC)

148:13 *his name ... his majesty*. As shown in the glory of his creation. (CSB)

is above. The glory of the Creator is greater than the glory of the creation. (CSB)

148:14 *horn*. The Lord’s anointed. It may be, however, that “horn” here represents the strength and vigor of God’s people (see 92:10; 1Sa 2:1; Jer 48:25; La 2:17). In any event, reference is to God’s saving acts for Israel—God is to be praised for his works in creation and redemption. (CSB)

Indicates not only a king, but points to Christ (Lk 1:69). (TLSB)

near. God’s people are close to His presence. (CSB)

Ps 148 Our insensibility to God’s goodness and glory is a sign of how far we have fallen. In all of His manifold creation, God has “raised up a horn for His people” (v 14). This is a prophecy of Christ, as evident in the words of Zechariah, John the Baptist’s father (Lk 1:68–69). Through Christ, God has gathered together His own people into the Church, declaring them to be His saints and dwelling near them with His very presence in Word and Sacrament. • O Lord, may the nebulas of outer space and each atom that You have crafted praise You! May everything living praise You, from archangels to microorganisms! May men and women, old and young, from every nation and culture praise You! O Christ, come quickly, and bring all things to their fulfillment. Amen. (TLSB)